A Conversation

with Rear Adm. Patrick M. Stillman

Rear Adm. Patrick M. Stillman
U.S. Coast Guard
Program Executive Officer
Integrated Deepwater System

Biography

Rear Admiral Patrick M. Stillman, the first program executive officer of the Integrated Deepwater System, leads the largest modernization and recapitalization program in the U.S. Coast Guard's history. Launched with its contract award in 2002 to Integrated Coast Guard Systems (a joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman), this innovative acquisition program will develop, acquire, and sustain an integrated system of three classes of cutters and associated small boats, manned and unmanned aircraft, and robust systems for integrated logistic support and command and control.

The Deepwater Program also entails the sustainment and modernization of aging Coast Guard legacy assets — like the cutter Storis, commissioned in 1942 — until they can be replaced by modern Deepwater platforms.

Rear Adm. Stillman has championed a new acquisition strategy that drives quality as a quantity all its own. Unlike conventional asset-for-asset replacement approaches, Deepwater's "system of systems" is driven by necessary outcomes — system-wide performance requirements and operational capabilities at an affordable total ownership cost. The admiral also is a champion of U.S. Navy-Coast Guard collaboration and cooperation to achieve the unity of effort so essential for the nation's maritime security and defense.

Rear Adm. Stillman's career includes numerous afloat assignments, including command of the Coast Guard Barque Eagle and the cutters Forward and Cape Cross. Rear Adm. Stillman graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1972 with a bachelor of science degree. He holds a master's of arts degree from Wesleyan University at Middletown, Conn., and a master's degree in public administration from George Washington University.

Q. Responsibilities for the U.S. Coast Guard have increased over the past few years to include a Homeland Security role in protecting the United States from terrorist attacks. What challenges does the Coast Guard still face in addressing heightened security requirements for the nation and this added mission responsibility?

Rear Adm. Stillman: Simply stated, we must provide our Coast Guard men and women with modern and more capable cutters, aircraft, small boats, and supporting systems to enable them to do their jobs more effectively, reliably, and safely. This goal is the essence of the Deepwater Program — delivering a 21st century Coast Guard able to perform the full spectrum of our multiple maritime missions.

The Coast Guard has made significant progress since 9/11 to secure our homeland, but maritime safety and security gaps remain. Admiral (Thomas H.) Collins, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, has said many times that these gaps present risks that must be reduced. In this sense, the Deepwater Program's progressive sustainment, modernization, and recapitalization of our aging assets are very much focused on *reducing risk* in the maritime domain.

We are guided by the Coast Guard's strategy for maritime homeland security and the Department of Homeland Security's strategic goals and priorities. Continued risk reduction is contingent upon improving the Coast Guard's capability, capacity, and readiness. Without these basic building blocks, successful implementation of maritime security strategies will not be sustainable.

For this reason, Deepwater's modernization and recapitalization program is the Coast Guard's highest budget priority. We *must* move the program forward with an appropriate sense of urgency if we are to improve mission performance across all Coast Guard mission areas. As I have said repeatedly since the Deepwater contract was awarded in 2002 to ICGS (Integrated Coast Guard Systems), "The need is real; the time is *now*!"

Q. The GAO (Government Accountability Office) has reported several times the Deepwater Program carries "major risk" in terms of program management and execution. How would you respond?

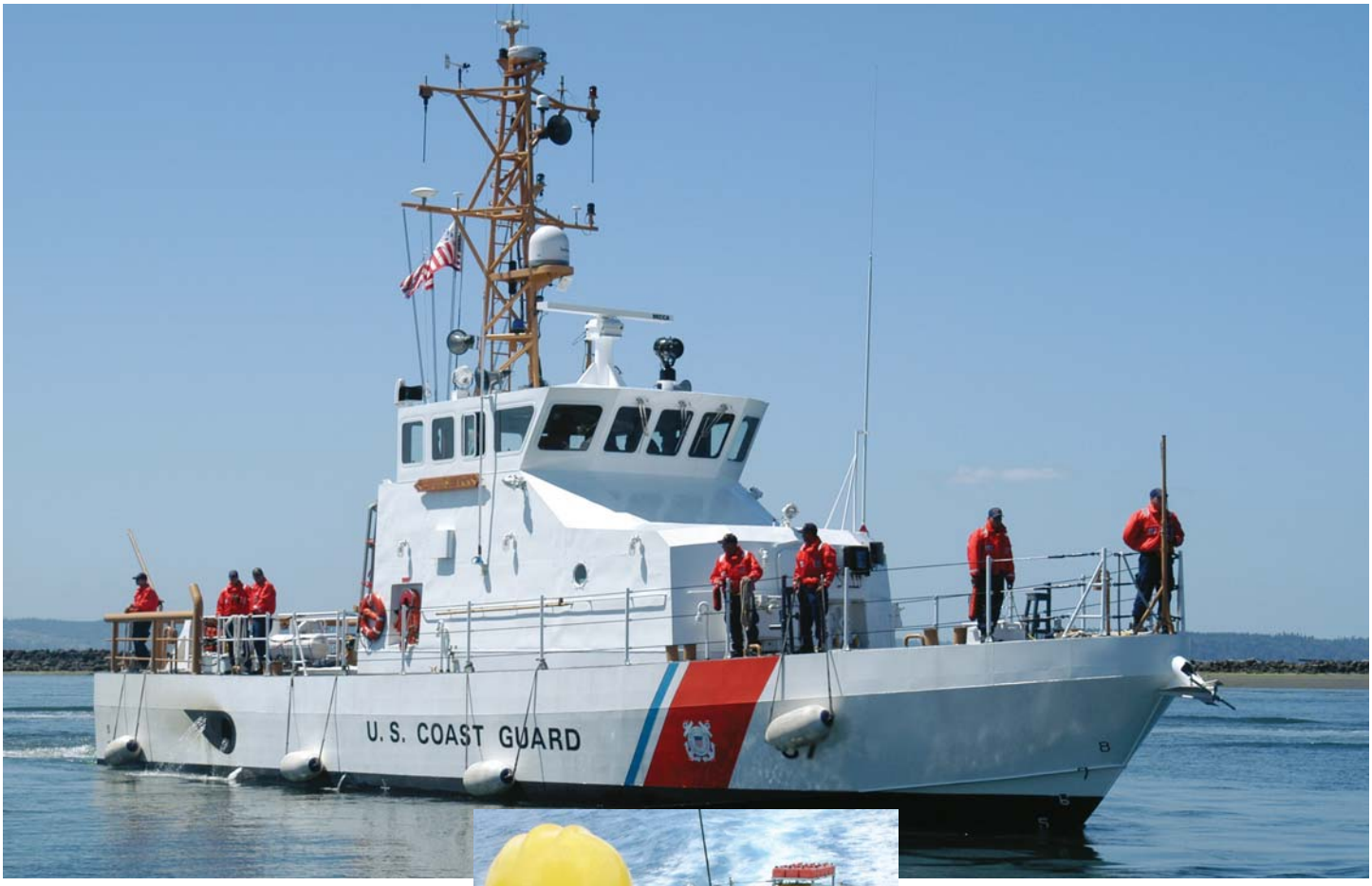
Rear Adm. Stillman: The GAO's most recent report (July 2005) on Deepwater described wide-ranging actions that the Coast Guard has taken to keep its assets operational, to explore additional strategies and approaches to improve the mission capabilities of these assets, and to implement GAO's earlier recommendations to improve program management, contractor accountability, and cost control through competition.

I have stated before that I value GAO's contributions. We are a learning organization, and we will continue to identify and adopt best-business practices throughout the life of this program.

You are right. While noting that progress has been made, GAO again concluded that the Deepwater Program carries major risks. This observation is not surprising, however, because risk is inherent in any progressive modernization and recapitalization program of Deepwater's scope, complexity, and projected 25-year duration.

What is germane to your question is that the Coast Guard has an effective risk-mitigation strategy in place to address the GAO's concerns and has completed or is vigorously implementing actions to address all GAO recommendations. Challenges remain, but Deepwater *is* being managed successfully.

We need to move forward. I do not take lightly the program-management risks that the GAO has identified in its many reports, but we are taking action and have effective procedures and controls in place. Our cooperative and vigorous response to GAO's reviews and recommendations — complimented by the agency, I would add — speaks volumes.



Should we not worry as well about the *other* risks our nation faces today as the result of our aging, less-reliable Coast Guard fleet? Of immediate concern to me, for example, is the far *greater* risk that will accrue to the nation's maritime homeland security, the safety of our citizens, and the Coast Guard's operational effectiveness if the Deepwater Program is *not* advanced as Secretary (of Homeland Security Michael) Chertoff and President George W. Bush have proposed in our fiscal year 2006 budget.

One study of Deepwater's revised post-9/11 Mission Need Statement concluded that a failure to fund Deepwater's revised capabilities would leave critical gaps in the country's maritime homeland-security posture.

This conclusion is supported by other independent studies. It also comports with the 9/11 Commission's finding that, compared to terrorist risks to commercial aviation, opportunities to do harm are as great, *or greater*, in maritime or surface transportation. That is a *real* risk *today* that we *must* take seriously and respond to appropriately!

Q. How has operational effectiveness been improved through process changes and technology innovation resulting from the Deepwater Program?

Rear Adm. Stillman: The primary improvements today result from efficiencies associated with Deepwater C4ISR upgrades to selected shore facilities and our current fleet of high and medium endurance cutters. Improved secure communications, shared track information, more timely intelligence, and a common operating picture all allow our on-scene commanders to deploy and *employ* their units far more effectively. The results — be it more drugs seized, illegal migrants interdicted, or lives saved — document this.

Looking ahead, as upgraded, converted, or new Deepwater platforms enter service, operational effectiveness will begin to improve dramatically. The National Security Cutter, for example, with its embarked aviation detachment of one Multi-Mission Cutter Helicopter and two Eagle Eye VUAVs (vertical takeoff-and-landing unmanned aerial vehicles), will increase our ability to surveil and search far broader ocean areas — 56,000 square nautical miles compared to today's high endurance cutter's 13,500 square nautical miles.

The improvements we will incorporate into our new Deepwater assets through the revised implementation plan — faster

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platform speeds, vertical-insertion capabilities, improved force protection weapons systems, network-centric C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), and soon — all will make cumulative contributions to our operational effectiveness year by year.

Q. Speaking of network-centric C4ISR, what are some of the implications of Deepwater's net-centric approach to Coast Guard operations?

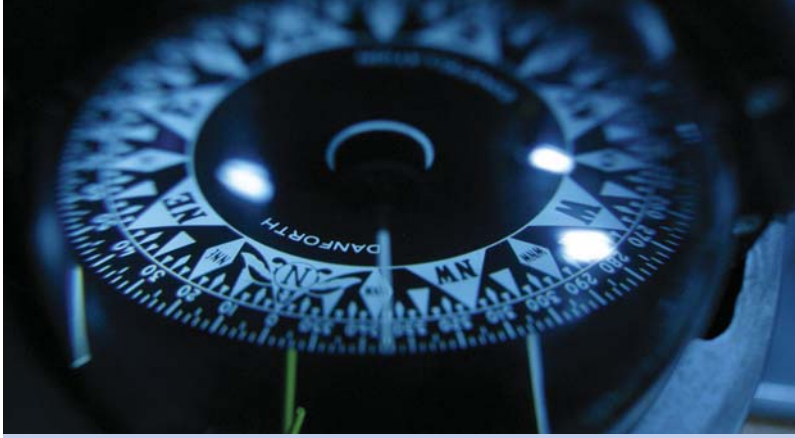
Rear Adm. Stillman: Deepwater's more capable platforms and net-centric approach to Coast Guard operations are the essence of Deepwater's transformational power. More capable and interoperable platforms and systems enable the Coast Guard to s*hape* the global maritime environment to promote U.S. national interests.

We will have a more informed understanding of maritime conditions, vulnerabilities, and threats so we can operate more effectively to *prevent* a terrorist incident, *protect* critical infrastructure and population centers, and *respond* to any development. Deepwater's contributions to improved maritime domain awareness (MDA) will play an important role in each of these areas. In so doing, we can press out our maritime borders and position the Coast Guard to act with greater certainty to reduce risk in a complex, often ambiguous environment.

How? Deepwater's network-centric system for C4ISR will allow us to harness the power of an interoperable network to improve performance in all mission areas through improved MDA and a common operating picture — a display of all operating assets and known threats shared by all mission participants.

This is key if the Coast Guard is to lead the inter-agency effort to know and respond to maritime conditions, anomalies, vulnerabilities, and threats to our homeland. Deepwater's C4ISR system will enable earlier awareness of events through the more effective gathering and fusing of terrorism-related information, analysis, coordination, and response. These functions are all critical to deterring, detecting, and defeating terrorist attacks.

Upgrades to Deepwater surface assets, for example, contribute directly to improved intelligence collection and fusion through a sophisticated Ship's Tactical Intelligence Center, sensors, and increased data-exchange bandwidth. As I said, we are seeing results today with our C4ISR upgrades to legacy cutters, but they are only a harbinger of what the future holds.



A Team Approach for Deepwater

Q. What roles should industry have in helping the Coast Guard translate the Deepwater Program from vision to reality?

Rear Adm. Stillman: Deepwater's partners in industry play an indispensable role in achieving our twin goals of achieving operational performance while managing total ownership cost. I am often quoted as saying we must move the program forward with ruthless execution. By that I mean we must achieve the program's stated outcomes on time for our customer — the men and women of the Coast Guard — but in an affordable way offering best value for the nation's tax dollars. This entails responsible stewardship and rigorous oversight.

The Coast Guard cannot do this alone. We require the world-class performance and experience that ICGS [Integrated Coast Guard Systems] brings to the table in the design, development, engineering, and acquisition of Deepwater's system of systems and, most importantly, its overall integration.

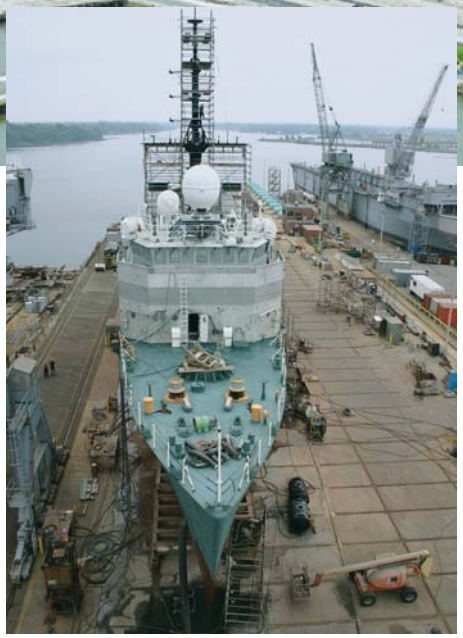
The Coast Guard does not possess this capability in-house, so a public-private teaming arrangement is fundamental to the success of our performance-based acquisition strategy.

The role of ICGS becomes clearer if you consider the scope of the Deepwater enterprise — a system encompassing multiple assets, missions, and outcomes. In addition to the progressive sustainment and modernization of selected legacy assets to allow us to bridge to the future, we are introducing three new classes of cutters, new or converted aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles, a robust network-centric system for C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), and an integrated-logistics system.

The optimal design, development, and delivery of a system of this magnitude and complexity require an industry partner able to evaluate and model alternate solutions, leverage market-edge technologies, analyze results through performance measurement, infuse new technology if it's available, and then re-evaluate and refine the system.

ICGS, our systems integrator, provides the expertise needed to identify the right technology solutions and to fuse many disparate parts into Deepwater's cohesive, interoperable whole. Our partnership with industry is a functional necessity. We can't do it alone. It's that simple.

In the end, our systems integrator will enable cost savings related to management and the execution of the acquisition. From an operator's perspective, the synergy of Deepwater's integrated system of systems — the ability to achieve *system-wide results* and effects of which each individual asset is incapable alone — is priceless!



Our commanding officers say it best in their cutter patrol summaries when they describe how Deepwater C4ISR upgrades are revolutionizing their world of work.

Q. How will the Deepwater Program enhance the role of the Coast Guard and its impact on joint operations across the branches of the military?

Rear Adm. Stillman: You raise an important point. Most Americans probably think of the Coast Guard primarily as a maritime safety and security organization — mindful of our preeminent search-and-rescue capabilities that result in the rescue of more than 5,000 people every year.

By law, however, the Coast Guard also is the fifth branch of the U.S. armed forces, and we are assigned specific national-defense missions in support of the Department of Defense and its combatant commanders around the world. Coast Guard units — still on duty today in the Persian Gulf — brought their unique law-enforcement, port security, and littoral capabilities to bear during Operation Iraqi Freedom, for example.

Our primary joint military partner is the U.S. Navy, and the National Fleet Policy — updated and signed by both the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Coast Guard in 2002 — guides our collaborative and complementary efforts to deliver the most maritime power for the taxpayer's investment.

The revised Deepwater implementation plan supports inter-agency collaboration in many ways, including the National Fleet Policy's mandate for affordable and interoperable capabilities to achieve more integration for improved maritime security. This is a key tenet in the president's new U.S. maritime security policy directive that calls for a fully coordinated federal effort to protect U.S. interests in the maritime domain.

I work closely with my counterpart in the Navy, Rear Admiral (Charles) Hamilton (Program Executive Officer Ships) to ensure Deepwater platforms and systems will be interoperable and fully complementary with the Navy's. We seek areas for collaboration as it relates to our design and development of the Offshore Patrol Cutter, for example, and the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship.

More capable, interoperable Deepwater platforms and systems will be of great value to U.S. combatant commanders. We will improve our ability to deploy side by side with the U.S. Navy as a full partner in higher-risk scenarios and more challenging missions. These capabilities cross the illusive seam that separates the nation's homeland security and homeland defense mission areas.

We follow this same framework in our work with other agencies in DHS. Seamless inter-agency cooperation, collaboration, and interoperability are common goals.

Q. How is the Coast Guard helping to pioneer information sharing among law enforcement and first responders, and why is this so important? What should be industry's role in helping implement this change – and how does industry help to speed this along?

Rear Adm. Stillman: Your question relates to these same principles of cooperation and collaboration, and DHS (Department of Homeland Security) is taking great strides to improve information sharing among other law-enforcement agencies and first responders. The port security assessment team assigned to Coast Guard Headquarters is contributing to this process by developing an improved online, database management system — an enterprise-wide system that will combine high-quality imagery, narrative reports, and other sources of information on the nation's ports that will be available to the Coast Guard, DHS, and other federal agencies.

The Deepwater Program has a role to play as it relates to information sharing because our C4ISR systems also must be compatible with law-enforcement agencies and first responders. Fortunately, the Coast Guard has a long history of such interaction with regional, state, and local agencies. We have stipulated interoperability requirements for our Deepwater platforms and systems to advance this important consideration.

Industry plays a critical role too, because it is engaged daily in the commercial marketplace. This is but another reflection on the important contributions our many industry partners bring to the Deepwater acquisition that may not be apparent to the casual observer.

Q. In closing, is there anything else you would like to say to our readers?

Rear Adm. Stillman: Yes — *thank you*! The collaborative acquisition strategy we have adopted to deliver the Integrated Deepwater System is *hard work*. The years since contract award in 2002 have required new ways of thinking and working together.

Change is never easy, but at the end of the day I am confident our Coast Guard-industry team will be able to reflect with pride on an achievement of enormous import for the Coast Guard and for the security of our nation and our citizens. We truly are delivering a 21st century Coast Guard to serve as our nation's shield of freedom for decades to come. *Press on!*

A Marathon Run for Homeland Security

Q. There is considerable work to be done, and always room for improvement, but are you satisfied with the nation's pace to address Homeland Security concerns?

Rear Adm. Stillman: Progress has been made, and the pace will quicken following Secretary Chertoff's recent "top-to-bottom" review to align the Department of Homeland Security so that its policies, operations, and structures are organized in the best way to address the potential threats — present and future — confronting the United States.

As a result, I expect we will see a more concerted effort to manage risk better in terms of threat, vulnerability, and consequence. Policies and operational missions will be prioritized according to a risk-based approach. He said that a series of preventive and protective steps will increase security at multiple levels. This was music to my ears!

As for Deepwater, I will not be fully satisfied until the men and women of the Coast Guard have the modern tools they need to fight the Global War on Terror more effectively and are able to go to sea or take to the sky with more reliable cutters and aircraft.

When that day arrives, we will have taken a significant step forward in closing the maritime-security gaps we see today and in improving safety, readiness, and performance across the boards. This will not occur overnight — it requires a sustained and progressive modernization and recapitalization effort over many years. The Deepwater Program is not a sprint; it is a marathon, and we must stay the course!

Deepwater is making a difference *now*. We have more than 15 projects underway –– including our high priority re-engining of HH-65 helicopters, C4ISR upgrades to legacy cutters, and a new Mission Effectiveness Program to refurbish medium endurance cutters.

Our legacy cutters' commanding officers are seeing a tremendous force-multiplier effect with our Deepwater C4ISR upgrades. Their improved ability to share intelligence and other operational information in near-real time is contributing to the success of our record year in our counter-drug operations. The design and development of our new cutters and aircraft also are moving forward smartly.

The administration has approved a post-9/11 revised Deepwater implementation plan that will deliver the improved capabilities and increased capacity so vital to the Coast Guard's future. With the continued support of Congress, I am optimistic that the Coast Guard will be able to address the nation's homeland-security requirements in a far more effective way. We can't get there quickly enough.